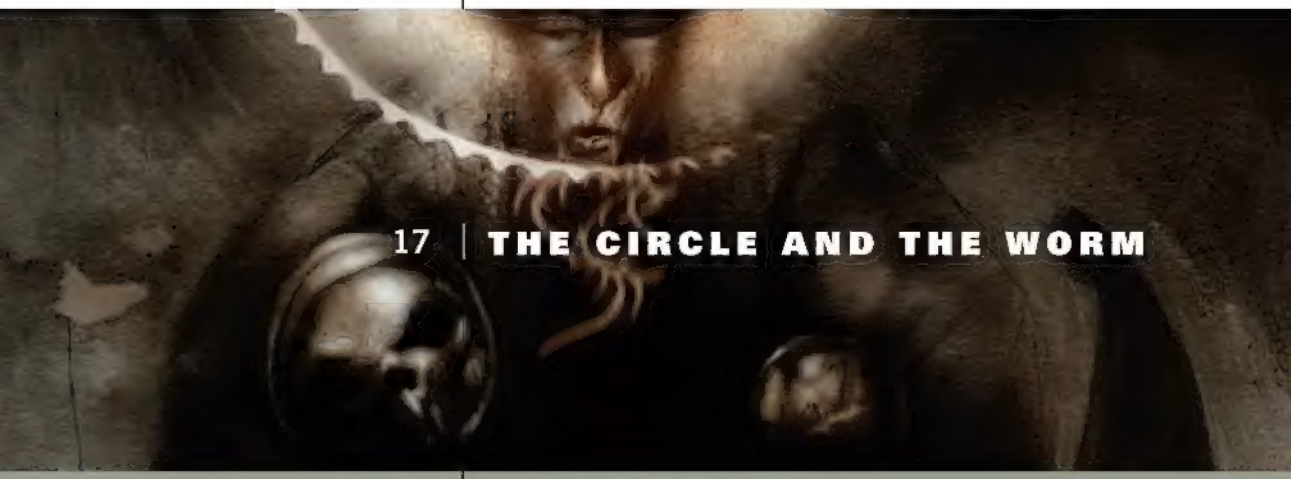
SPAWN
THE DARK AGES
17
DIGITAL
EDITION

TODD McFARLANE AND IMAGE COMICS PRESENT



17 | THE CIRCLE AND THE WORM

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SPAWN THE DARK AGES 16 SUMMARY

Covenant finds himself miles from Rhyll, and still on the run, when he encounters Shiann, his lost lover. Although Covenant knows she is long dead, he willingly follows her to a clearing in the forest, and discovers too late that he has been led into a trap. A small band of Druids are waiting for him, and perform a ritual that drains Covenant of his Hellspawn powers: his necroplasm. When Spawn realizes he is bleeding red blood, he assumes he has once again become a man. He assumes he is now free from the curse of being a Hellspawn. But nothing could be further from the truth.

SPAWN CREATED BY
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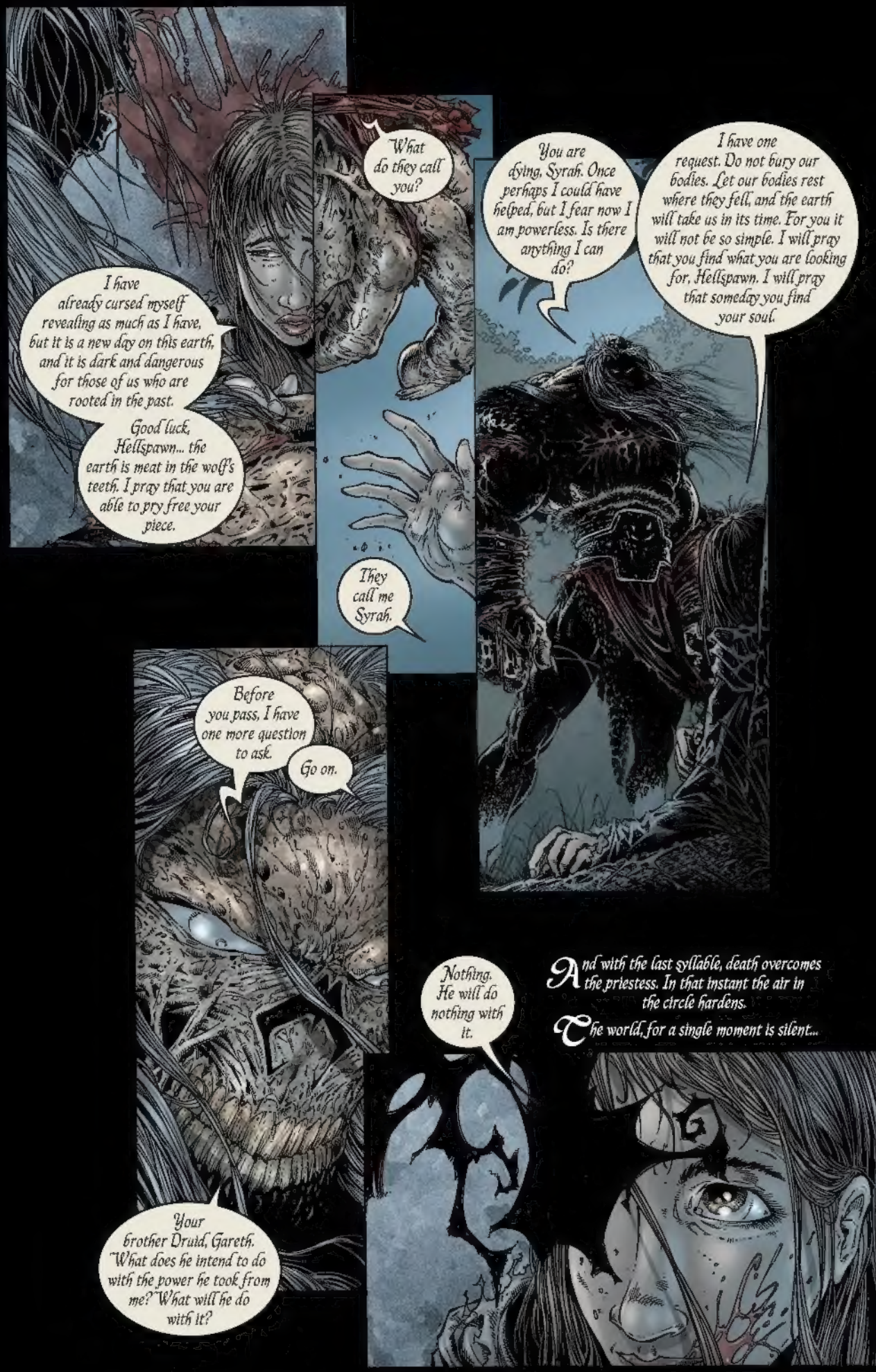
Hours have passed since the Druid Priests called upon the forces and tore the Necroplasmic energy from the Hellspawn.
Hours in which the Hellspawn watched a wound on his chest bleed red, red blood.
Daylight has broken, the sun slicing through the layered clouds, and for the first time since his initial death, Covenant feels the dim heat touching his now fragile flesh .

Now he lies frozen, hugging the pillar of the Druid Stone Circle, and mutters the only words he has spoken since he became not a man and not a Hellspawn, but something in between.
I am free.
You were always free.
Who?
It is a trick of the new Gods to convince you otherwise.
Tell, me woman. Why did you do this? Why did you take what Hell has bestowed me?
We took only what gave you power. What part of you is still attached to the darkness, is for you to decide.
You did not answer my question. Why me? Why the attack? I have heard many tales of your order standing in the path of armies to prevent violence. Why then would you ambush me as you did?

We, the five of us, and Gareth, were turned away from our home on Anglesey for speaking out against the rise of the new Gods... the church. We, The Druids, are all but extinct because of the scourge of the Romans and now, even with their departure, their effect remains. Now there is a call to a single God against a single evil.
Our way is quickly fading into the abyss of time. We took it upon ourselves to fight back.
But what will become of me?
You ask many questions. Celtic blood must run in your veins.
But what has this to do with me? I do not stand on either side of any war, real or imagined.
You are just a symbol, one of many attempts to invade our precious beauty. It's not your fault. It's what lived inside you.


I have already cursed myself revealing as much as I have, but it is a new day on this earth, and it is dark and dangerous for those of us who are rooted in the past.
Good luck, Hellspawn... the earth is meat in the wolf's teeth. I pray that you are able to pry free your piece.
What do they call you?
They call me Syrah.
You are dying, Syrah. Once perhaps I could have helped, but I fear now I am powerless. Is there anything I can do?
I have one request. Do not bury our bodies. Let our bodies rest where they fell, and the earth will take us in its time. For you it will not be so simple. I will pray that you find what you are looking for, Hellspawn. I will pray that someday you find your soul.
Before you pass, I have one more question to ask.
Go on.
Your brother Druid, Gareth. "What does he intend to do with the power he took from me?" What will he do with it?
Nothing. He will do nothing with it.
And with the last syllable, death overcomes the priestess. In that instant the air in the circle hardens.
The world, for a single moment is silent...

And then the rains begin again.

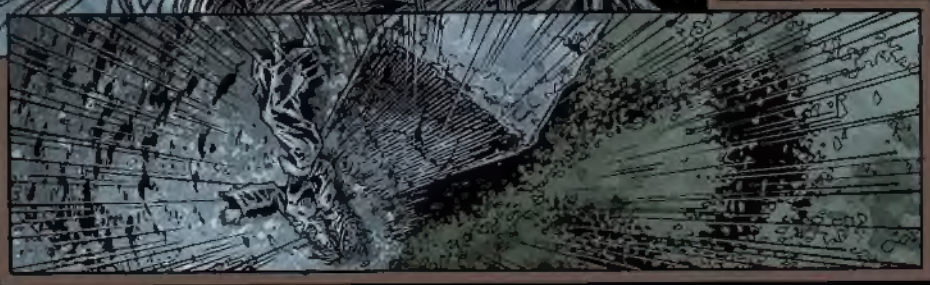
For the Hellspawn once known as Covenant, the world is changed. It is naked and new and without shape. But one thing is certain...It suddenly seems much larger than he ever thought possible.

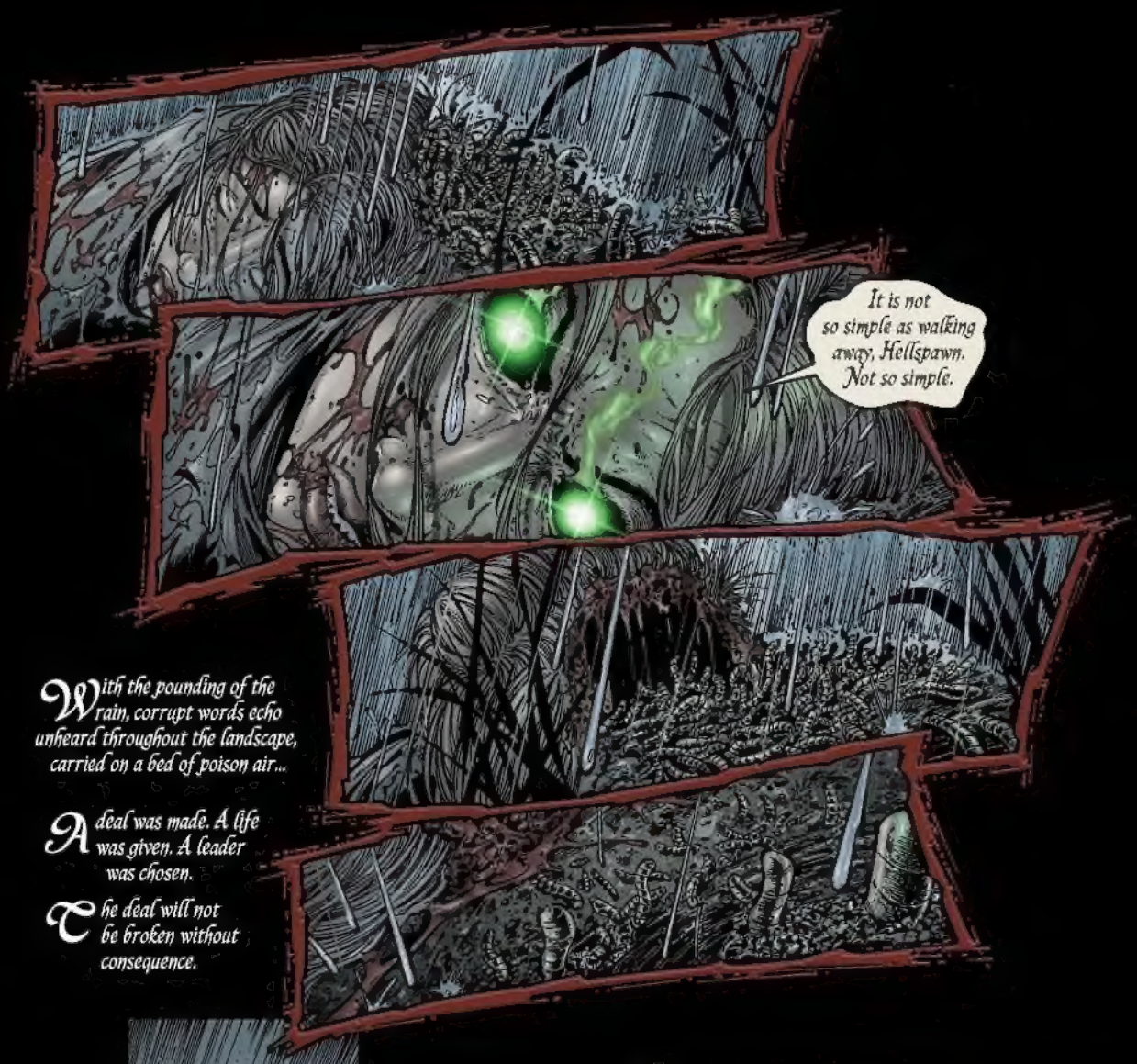
For the first time since his original death, he believes that he controls his destiny.

For this one single moment of his cruel journey, the Hellspawn is a new man with a future as wide open and expansive as the land itself.

But...

From life to death to life again, what lies ahead is an impossible guess when you are a pawn in a war of gods, demons, devils and celestial spirits.



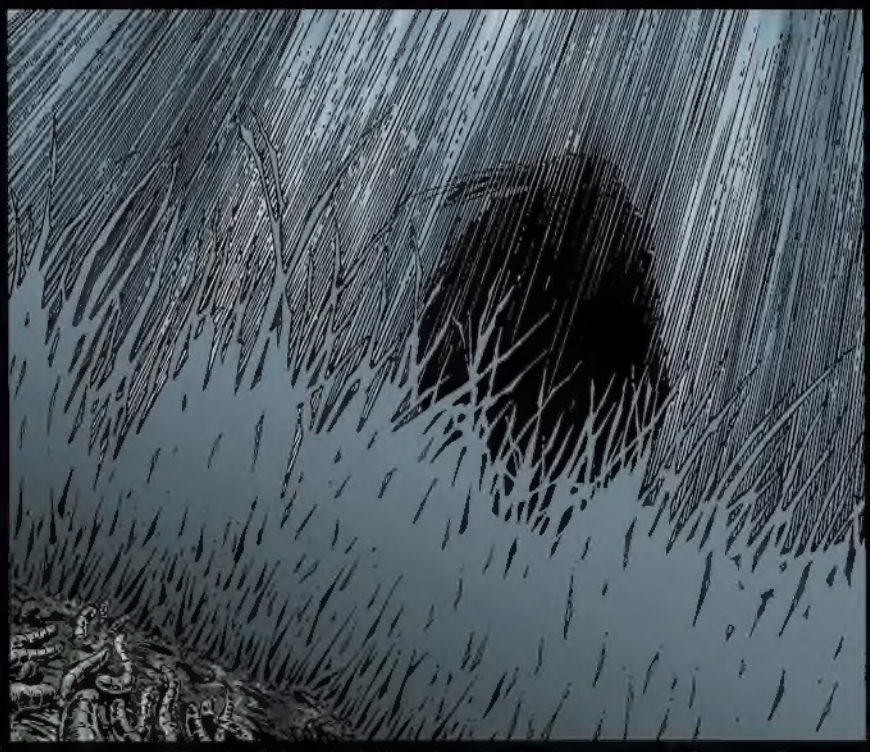


With the pounding of the rain, corrupt words echo unheard throughout the landscape, carried on a bed of poison air...

A deal was made. A life was given. A leader was chosen.

The deal will not be broken without consequence.

The deal will not be broken without pain.



Hold still, evil. There will be no escape for you.
A half night and a half day's walk away, the priest called Gareth Illan carries the captive Necroplasm into the deepest Black Forest.
If the light does not draw trouble, surely your incessant movement will.
His destination, still a week's walk, far from the battling clans of the north and south, and even farther from his fellow Druids to the west where he can hide the evil from the eyes and hands of a whole new breed of enemy.
He has made himself a target in an already unstable, unpredictable and dangerous land.
He is well aware that he has drawn his line in the sand. By his actions he has separated himself from the sect of the Druid faith, and has made his presence known to the new gods who will stop at nothing to take what he has taken from the Hellspawn.

...and they say that the ruler of Rhyll mutilated all but a handful of the villagers.
Aye, but what sort of man could kill so many in so short a time? I say this man is a monster spat from the ass of the dark one himself.
Speak of the devil.
Aye, it's disgusting as anything I've ever laid eyes on!
Auugh! What manner of man could do such a thing?!
Keep your eyes wide. Whoever did this could be anywhere. These are dark and dangerous woods. Take no chances. Kill anything that moves.
You speak the words that rose in my own throat, Herger.

The eyes of evil are blind The wood embraces me as I have embraced the wood The eyes of mine enemies are blind to both.
..she says tell me you love me, so I say "I love you", but a damn fool could see that I was lying to her.
And what was her response.
A hard slap and a bloody rough romp on the rocks. And that was the end of that Now she is my wife and she still thinks I'm lying when I tell her I love her

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At what moment the Hellspawn decided to return to Rhyll he can not remember.
It was after he had departed the Druids powerful Stone Circle, but before the downpour came to a sudden halt.
Perhaps it was when he felt the cold over his body as it sank deep into his flesh and he realized that he had not felt sensation for so many years.
Possibly it was when he realized that his muscles ached, and his bones felt worn.
Perhaps it was the moment that he realized the most profound effect of the removal of the Necroplasm...
...the moment that he realized how long it had been since he felt his own fragility.

The aches and the pains brought his mind to the people he had left behind in the wake of the slaughter.
Return to the village and salvage what he can of his people and the humanity that they brought to his spirit.
All he has to do now...

...to get there alive.
Well, this must be the day the gods have smiled upon us. If I were to guess, this would be the beast who slaughtered the people of Rivyll and left nothing for us to thrust or plunder.
He don't took much to me.
Aye. Let's have at 'em.
I would think twice about your words and your actions. It is only because this is a new day that I will allow you to turn and walk away. I will pretend that I heard none of your words.
The beast is giving us the ultimatum. Clearly all of the bloodshed he has inflicted has altered his ability to count. You are outnumbered, beast. If I were you, I would turn tail and run.
You have been warned.
It is you that has been warned.

I shall remember your forewarning when I trod across your piled withered bodies!
Yaaagh!
Aaagh!
What trick is this, rogue?! What manner of sorcery do you possess? I feel your slightest touch!
I need no trickery to down a coward beast the likes of you!
Ahhhhhrrrgh!
I... I am weak.
This cannot be freedom.

You speak nonsense, beast!
Arrrgh! Noooooooo!
No...
What say you now?
We are not so easily beaten as innocent women and children, are we?
Y_ you d...don't understand..
Not... this.. way.

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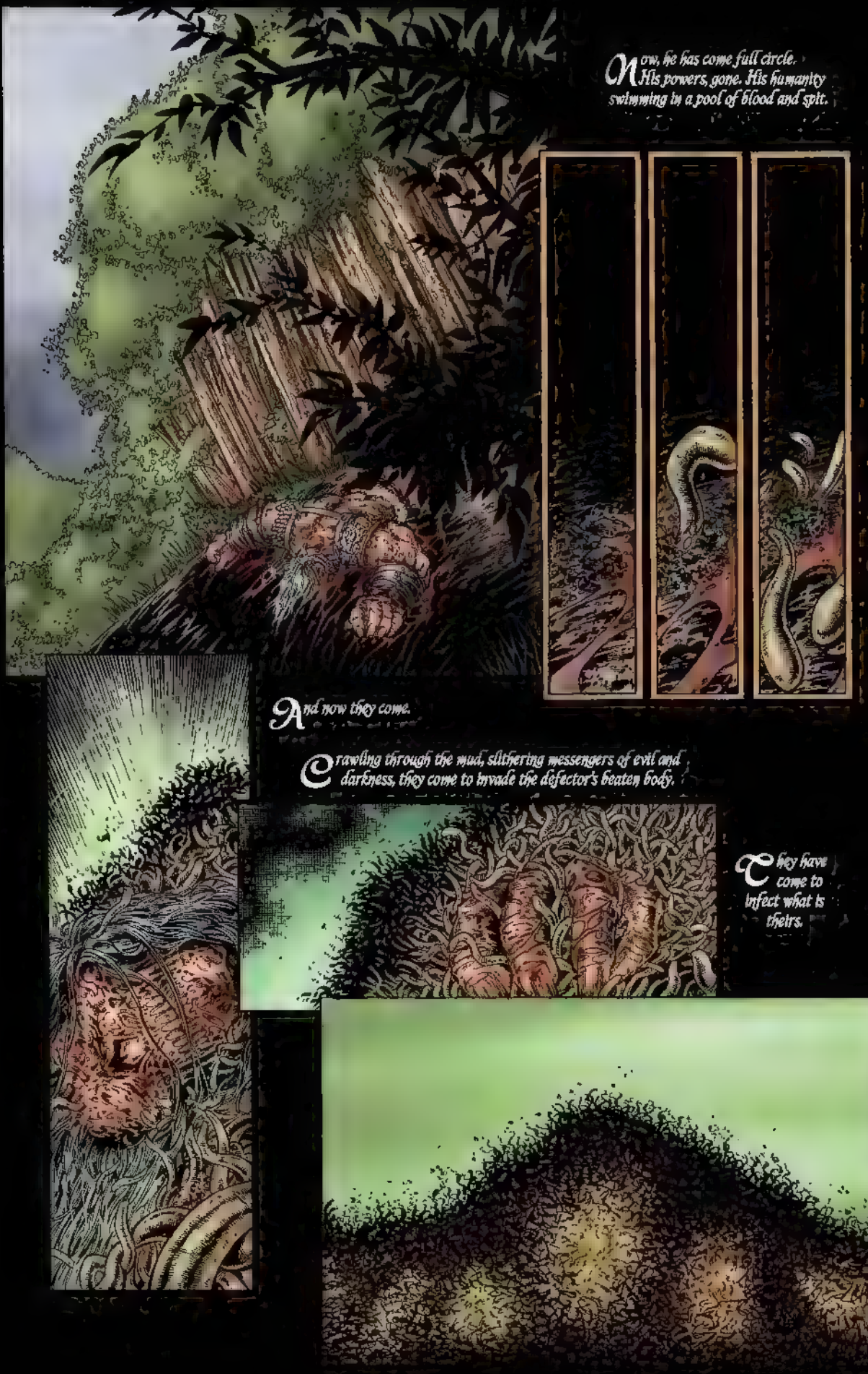
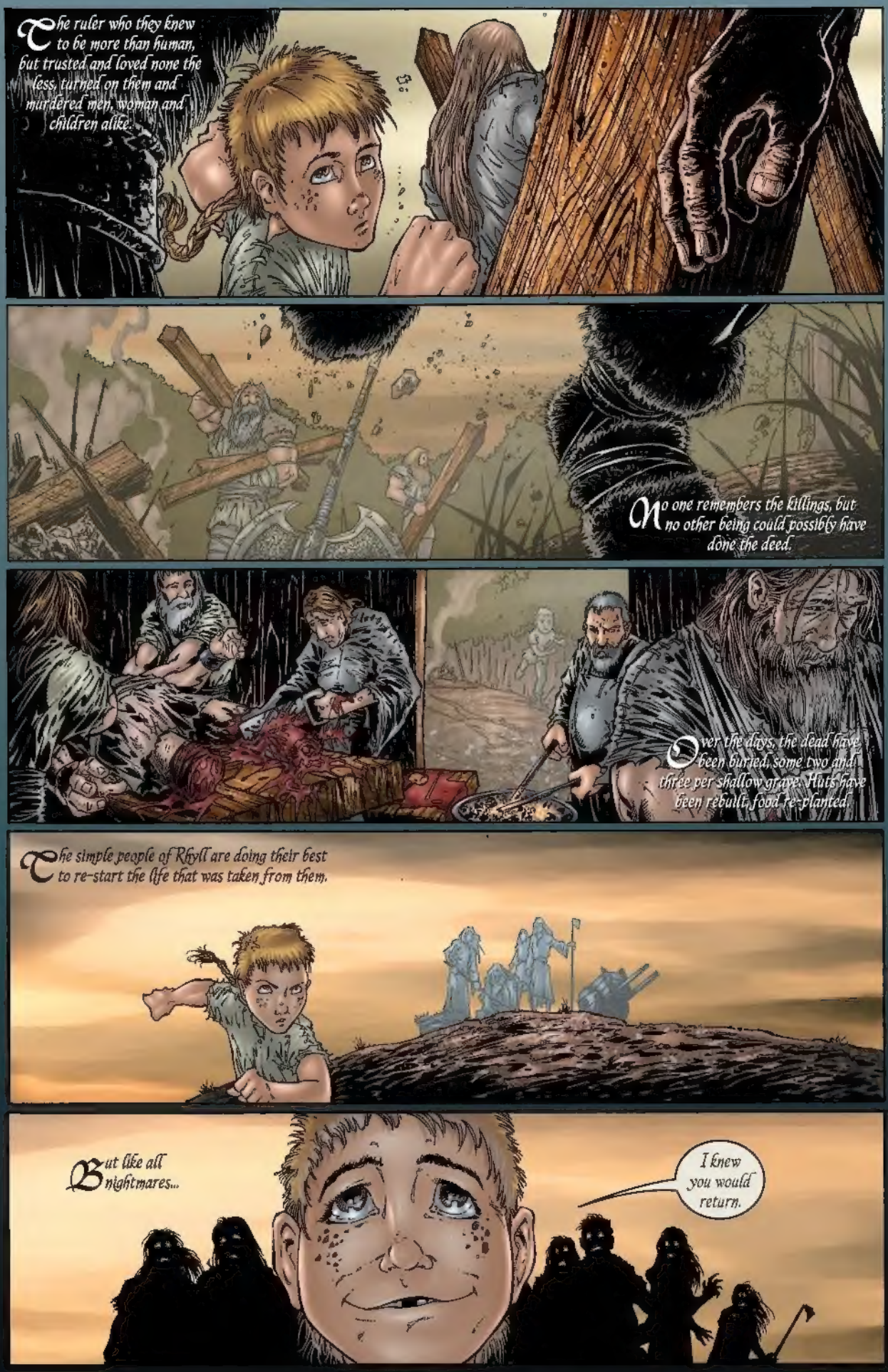
That's enough. Let the creatures of the wood finish him off
He's not good enough for food. Let me crush his skull
No. Leave him. I suspect living is better punishment than death for this one.
Once he was a fearless hero, a man on the brink of becoming a leader. Until his righteous arrogance led to his sudden demise in a foreign land.
Not... like.. this...
But even death would not slow the will of Covenant and he rose from the dead with the hand of darkness upon his shoulder.


Now, he has come full circle. His powers, gone. His humanity swimming in a pool of blood and spit.
And now they come.
Crawling through the mud, slithering messengers of evil and darkness, they come to invade the defector's beaten body.
They have come to infect what is theirs.

The cry of the Hellspawn shatters the winds and carries for miles...
We should go back. Finish the deed.
No... never. I never want to see that thing again.
Above the trees...
Across the fields...
Such agony. I pray for you, Hellspawn. I pray that you find the place in the world you seek.
To ears who pray that it is a cry of death for others and not another shadow of death coming for them
It is him.
The village of Rhyll has experienced its own unique brand of pain in the past days and night.


The ruler who they knew to be more than human, but trusted and loved none the less, turned on them and murdered men, woman and children alike.
No one remembers the killings, but no other being could possibly have done the deed.
Over the days, the dead have been buried, some two and three per shallow grave. Huts have been rebuilt, food re-planted.
The simple people of Rhyll are doing their best to re-start the life that was taken from them.
But like all nightmares...
I knew you would return.

They have a way of coming back.
H... help... me...

DARKNESS